R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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INNOVATION AND THE NEW CONCERN FOR THE DISADVANTAGED.

BY- JOHNTZ, WILLIAM F.

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REVIEWED ARE SOME OF THE APPROACHES WHICH HAVE BEEN USED TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS. IT IS FELT THAT THE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION EFFORTS HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED BECAUSE MOST PROJECTS HAVE EITHER UTILIZED TRADITIONAL CONTENT AND TEACHING METHODS OR HAVE BEEN REMEDIAL. ALSO, THEY DO NOT START BY RAISING THE DISADVANTAGED STUDENT'S SELF-IMAGE AND, CONSEQUENTLY, HIS MOTIVATION. CURRENTLY, THE STRESS HAS SHIFTED TO INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATION, WHICH CAN MORE READILY BE TRIED IN GHETTO THAN IN MIDDLE-CLASS SCHOOLS BECAUSE NOTHING ELSE HAS PROVED EFFECTIVE IN EDUCATING THE DISADVANTAGED AND BECAUSE COLLEGE-CONSCIOUS MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTS ARE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT EXPERIMENTATION. A HAWTHORNE EFFECT IS CREATED IN THE GHETTO SCHOOL BY THE VERY PROCESS OF INITIATING AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM, AND THUS THE SELF-IMAGE OF THE ENTIRE SCHOOL IS IMPROVED. IT IS ALSO NOW BECOMING RECOGNIZED THAT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LEVEL TO BEGIN EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION. AND BECAUSE INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES MAY HAVE WIDESPREAD APPLICABILITY, MORE EFFECTIVE METHODS OF INFORMATION DIFFUSION ARE NEEDED. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "CTA JOURNAL," VOLUME 63, NUMBER 1, JANUARY 1967. (NH)

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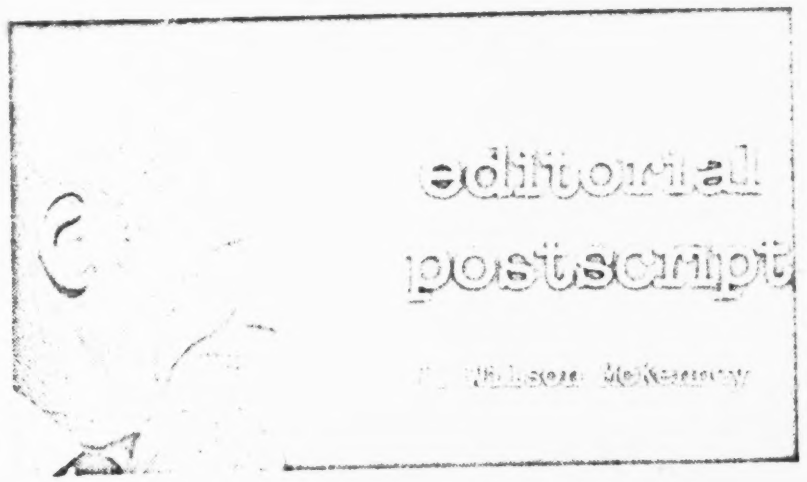

WHAT'S NEW?

BECAUSE Author Bill Johntz so well expressed the introductory thoughts I was forming as I prepared this issue on "Innovation," I shall not attempt to rephrase them here. Instead, I shall try to report the results of my canvass of a dozen California districts that applied for and received Title III funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, funds which were intended to stimulate new thinking about ways to teach our youth.

But first, a few words about the contents of this issue. The professors at Ohio State University offer a philosophical basis for our theme (Planning for Educational Change) and their precautionary comments should be useful as we examine the changes offered on other pages.

Curriculum changes are basic to our whole discussion; Ken Brown has reminded us about its historic evolution in California and Harry Broudy has suggested "a new way of thinking and maneuvering." As Ken says, "instructional policy is among the best and most promising of educational innovations," and we should remember this as we examine gadgets and programs which have appeared as magic under the flush of new federal funds.

How the teaching environment makes it possible

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INNOVATION and the New Concern for the Disadvantaged

By William F. Johntz

AT EVERY period in history certain key words and phrases appear over and over in the rhetoric of various intellectual disciplines. Sometimes the frequent use of these words simply attests to the fact that they symbolize solutions to problems that concern large numbers of people: "antibiotics," "transistorized," "social security," "the pill." In other instances words become extremely commonplace with particular think-groups because they represent important insights or theories into the physical or psychological world. Examples are "relativity" and "self-fulfilling prophecy." Still another category of these words consists of those whose popularity is a function of their metaphorical merit. I would place "domino theory" (one of the basic rationales of our Viet Nam policy) and "brinkmanship" in these groups.

Perhaps the most interesting category of the oft-spoken word is the one in which the word does not suggest solutions or provide insights or metaphorical titillation, but expresses an intense concern with a particular problem. The word "co-existence" came increasingly into vogue as Russia and the U. S. built military systems capable of annihilating one another —as well as the rest of mankind. Now, "coexistence" is not so much a theory as it is a one-word prayer for peace.

In the field of education there is a word with a similar genesis that appears with ever-increasing frequency in periodical, pulpit, and podium. Legislators, teachers, administrators, and school boards all chant the magic word: INNOVATION.

Creativity, imagination, and innovation will be important criteria in the allocation of hundreds of millions of dollars of educational funds during the coming year. Project writers throughout the U. S. are racking their brains and plagiarizing each other for new, fresh, innovative proposals.

In view of the general conservatism of the educational establishment, how can we explain this feverish interest in change? Public school educators who in the past have reflexively defended their traditional policies and programs find themselves cast today in the unfamiliar, but exciting, role of proposing changes, significant changes, in these very same policies and programs.

I would submit that our newly discovered interest in educational change is directly related to our new concern for the disadvantaged students in our schools. These two phenomena are not purely coincidental; there is a large element of causality in the relationship.

For decades the public schools of America have made no serious effort to educate the disadvantaged child. The fact that these children fell further and further behind each year they attended school was considered regrettable; but almost cosmic in its inevitability. Most school districts, in fact, responded to this inevitability by spending less money on each

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BILL JOHNTZ is employed half time at UC Berkeley as associate director of the Special Opportunities Scholarship Program whose purpose is to prepare and assist disadvantaged students for college entrance. Berkeley Unified School District also employs Mr. Johntz half time in a similar program conceived and developed by him over the last three years. The 27 classes in Berkeley have been so widely publicized that his "discovery" method of teaching mathematics is being adopted in many other districts throughout the country.

Mr. Johntz has described the success of his methods before the State Board of Education and many educational conferences. He holds degrees from Duke University and the University of California at Berkeley, majoring in psychology and mathematics. Photo at left shows Johntz with a sixth grade pupil in Project SEED (Special Elementary Education for the Disadvantaged) at Longfellow School. Photo by John Pearson, Berkeley.

disadvantaged child than they spent on the more advantaged child. Schools heavily populated by disadvantaged students (for example, urban Negroes) had larger pupil-teacher ratios, less well-qualified teachers, inadequate administrative and counseling staffs, and inferior plants.

Fortunately, during the last 10 years, a happy convergence of political, sociological, and historical forces have drastically altered this situation. School districts are no longer unconcerned about their disadvantaged students. It isn't so much that the heart of the establishment has changed as it is that the "carrot" of federal dollars, coupled with the "stick" of vigorous civil rights activity—both on and off the streets, has made even the most insensitive school districts interested, at last, in doing something about the disadvantaged.

THEY FALL BEHIND EACH YEAR

Of course another important event that caused school districts to take a serious look at the Negro was the 1954 Supreme Court decision on segregation. (Most Negroes in our society are disadvantaged both economically and educationally.) When school boards tried to decide which Negro students or schools to integrate they rediscovered what most teachers already knew: the overwhelming majority of Negroes in our schools were significantly behind national achievement norms in most subject areas. Furthermore, they discovered that the Negro child was not only behind in terms of his absolute position, but that he fell further behind each year he attended school.

For most school districts and the communities they served, this information resulted in mild to severe trauma. Some bigot boards, of course, reveled in these facts, happily proclaiming that their longheld belief had been verified—the Negro was indeed genetically inferior! Most school districts, however, were considerably more enlightened in realizing that the Negro student's problems were environmental and not genetic. Indeed, it was about this time that the phrase, "culturally disadavantaged" came into the educational literature. The phrase itself says in effect: "These people have problems, problems that are due to cultural or environmental conditions and not to any intrinsic characteristics of the people themselves." Some persons in positions of power in education even decided that perhaps they themselves were at least partially responsible for the condition of these students.

The incipient guilt associated with the revelations of the plight of the Negro in our public schools, coupled with the 1954 Supreme Court decision, led to the first of three periods of thought about disadvantaged students. The first phase had two main features:

1) The decision was made by most school districts to inaugurate some kind of integration, ranging from the token to the extensive. Many educators believed that integration *per se* would enable the Negro to "catch up."

2) The decision was also made by many districts to bring the schools that were predominantly populated by the disadvantaged up to the standards of more middle class schools. The people who proposed this solution had two main ideas in mind:

a) If we improve our predominantly Negro schools, the pressure for integration would decline.

b) The improved schools would enable the disadvantaged student to catch up. This in turn would make more extensive integration possible in the future.

These two ideas are contradictory, but in the strange and wonderful world of social change, it is not unusual to find two groups with different aims using the same argument for mutually exclusive goals.

In any case, phase I in the history of the new concern for the disadvantaged could, I think, be best characterized as the integration-fix-up phase. The sounds of school repair and construction were heard throughout the land and at last the faces of Negroes appeared in some white classrooms. But still the disadvantaged did not catch up. There was improvement, but fortunately it satisfied no one—not even those school board members who had been forced to take integrative and fix-up actions against their personal desires. Why, you might ask, would the bigot boards not be satisfied with meager progress, or for that matter, zero or negative progress?

PROBLEM-SOLVING PEOPLE

The answer to this paradox lies, I think, in the American public's intense desire to solve problems—any kind of problem. This lust for problem-solving is so great that people will work vigorously on problems whose solutions are in conflict with their own personal desires and prejudices. This is particularly true where the problem is in some sense quantifiable.

If you make a brightly colored graph of cigarette sales in the U. S. and show it to a group of tobacco company employees, even those who are righteously

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(Continued from page 6)

opposed to smoking feel a desire to see the sales curve go up, up, up. There are White southerners (and others) in Washington, D.C., working for the Office of Economic Opportunity, who, in spite of their personal prejudices about Negroes, have become fascinated with solving the "*problem* of the poor."

I think that it would be desirable for newspapers to publish each day, along with the Dow Jones and batting averages, the percentage of disadvantaged children reading at grade level.

One may ask, "What are the circumstances under which an undesirable social condition takes on the official status of 'a problem' so that friend and foe can work on it together?" I think the most important requirement is that an individual or institution with great prestige christen the social malcondition as a "problem." Though segregation has been a terrible problem in the U. S. for centuries, it became an "official" problem to be solved only after the Supreme Court declared it illegal; the Court's action "identified" segregation as a problem. (One of the major psychological blocks to peace is that there does not exist a high status world institution to formally place war in the "problem to be solved" category.)

RISE OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

After it became clear that the integration-fix-up phase of working with disadvantaged students was not meeting with significant success, we found another word creeping into the educational jargon. The word was "compensatory education," and this heralded the beginning of the second phase. Second phase reasoning went something like this: Integration has many psychological, educational, and social values for the advantaged as well as the disadvantaged, but, alone, it is not enabling the disadvantaged child to catch up. Furthermore, the non-integrated disadvantaged students who remained behind in their "newly fixed-up," "good-as-suburban" schools are not catching up. In short, integration and/or equal quality schools are not enough. What we must do is provide *preferential* treatment for the disadvantaged students.

In 1964 the federal government made it possible to provide better than equal educational opportunities for the disadvantaged through its passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Most school districts have had the use of these federal funds for one full year now. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent throughout the nation on a seemingly wide variety of projects. The variety, however, is more apparent than real. Actually the overwhelming majority of these projects suffer from two grave faults:

1) I would call the first of these faults the "more and better of the same" syndrome, in which the same teachers with the same attitudes and the same methods teach the same content they have always taught to the same children. This teaching may be going on in a classroom with a smaller pupil-teacher ratio and a larger audio-visual equipment-teacher ratio, but as desirable as the ratio changes may be, they alone will not guarantee success.

2) Another serious flaw in these programs is that they are basically remedial. First a school district inventories the shortcomings of its disadvantaged students and then concentrates on their weaknesses. Superficially this sounds reasonable, but the actual effect of this emphasis on the student's past failures is to further negate his already negative self-image. When one realizes that the disadvantaged child's lack of motivation is primarily based on the fact that he believes the myths of inferiority that have been perpetrated about him it becomes readily apparent that these remedial programs are doomed to failure.

Successful remedial work can take place only *after* the child has enjoyed a success experience which raises his self-image and consequently his motivation.

A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT

For example, I discovered three years ago in an experimental project in Berkeley that disadvantaged elementary school children have a high degree of success with abstract, conceptually-oriented algebra and coordinate geometry when it is presented to them by a person well-trained in mathematics, using the discovery method. The success these children experienced with the abstract algebra improved their self-image, in turn making it much easier to interest them in the remedial arithmetic they needed. If I had first approached them with the remedial arithmetic, which is laden with failure connotations for them, before I presented the fresh abstract alge-

Experimentation in ghetto schools provides the best assurance that there will be improvement in education everywhere.

bra, they would undoubtedly have experienced failure with both.

Throughout the United States there is a growing awareness of the ineffectiveness of "the more and better of the same" approach as well as the remedial approach that ignores the self-image of the child. It is, in fact, the growing awareness of these two problems that has ushered in the third and present phase of thinking about the disadvantaged child in our public schools.

The battle cry of the new wave is, as I indicated earlier, *INNOVATION*. It is, I think, a logical battle cry. After all, if "more and better of the same" is not working, then the obvious alternative is *change*. "Innovation" is, of course, simply a synonym for positive change. And if we are going to provide children with self-image-raising success experiences before we gently introduce the remedial, a great deal of *innovation* and ingenuity will be required to find those fresh, new, exciting subject areas and methods with which the disadvantaged child can succeed.

Some states, such as California, with its exceptionally imaginative and competent state compensatory education director and staff, have encouraged creativity and innovation in compensatory education programs from their inception. Consider, for example, the following quotation from *Guidelines for the Development of Demonstration Programs in Reading and Mathematics* (authorized by Senate Bill 28, Article 5).

> "The Legislature has provided that any provision of the California Education Code may be waived by the State Board of Education in order to permit intensive instruction in reading and mathematics and complete flexibility in experimentation."

It is a remarkable and altogether happy day when the educational establishment not only talks innovation, creativity, and flexibility, but also takes those crucial steps that make its implementation possible. Many state education codes constitute inviolate guardians of the status quo in education.

The innovation thrust is, however, not going to be limited to those few states like California that have really exemplary compensatory education structures at the state level. I believe, in fact, that during the next few years we are going to see innovative programs even in school districts and states that are generally uneasy about educational change. These innovative programs will, however, operate exclusively in schools peopled by the poor. The reason that even very conservative school boards are willing to entertain innovative proposals for the disadvantaged is because they feel, "Our disadvantaged students are monumentally unsuccessful in our public schools anyhow, so why not try something different? We have nothing to lose." These same people would be extremely reluctant to instigate change for their middle class college prep students because they fear parental reprisals if the experiment doesn't work.

The middle class parent's monomania regarding his child's getting into college is, I think, reducing educational creativity and innovation in suburbia. It is a delightful but ironic twist of the times that the bright, capable, imaginative teacher or administrator who wishes to effect educational change would do well to look at the slums rather than suburbia. Not only is it more probable that your school district will allow you to try your innovative educational experiments with disadvantaged children than with middle class children; but also if your methods should prove to be successful with the disadvantaged, most educators would believe that these methods would work with the rest of the children in the district as well. In brief, the widespread acceptance of a new educational technique is much more probable if its success is originally proven with the disadvantaged rather than with the advantaged.

HAWTHORNE EFFECT

Another argument in favor of carrying out educational experiments in ghetto schools is that the very process of carrying on research creates a Hawthorne effect for the whole school involved. Not only are the students involved in the experiment favorably affected, but the staff and balance of the studentbody are affected as well. Regardless of the outcome of the experimentation, the self-image of the school is improved by the experience *per se*. The destructive sense of isolation from the mainstream so characteristic of the ghetto school is destroyed as well.

I would hope that these considerations might encourage private sources of educational research money, such as foundations, universities and industries, to carry on even more of their research in schools peopled by the poor rather than the middle class. The results of this research can then be applied to all of the children in our schools.

The new concern for the disadvantaged students in our schools is resulting in still another automatic benefit to education in general. This benefit results from the fact that when educators work seriously with the disadvantaged student, they inevitably rediscover the monumental importance of that tritest of all educational cliches, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." They are discovering that $100 of their precious compensatory education funds spent at the elementary level is effecting more salutary change than $1200 spent at the secondary level. Our present allocation of the public school dollar among the various grade levels is the single greatest irrationality in our entire educational system.

Someday, somewhere, a superintendent of exceptional courage and imagination will stop simply talking about the importance of preventing educational problems at the elementary level rather than patching them up at the secondary level. He will go before his school board to request a major reallocation of *district* funds, not only federal funds, from the secondary level to the elementary level. Secondary education will be temporarily disallocated, but the ultimate result will be a vastly improved secondary school system when students enter the seventh grade truly prepared for a secondary education.

I would suggest then that the single most important innovation that will come out of our new concern with the disadvantaged will be to place elementary school education in its proper position in the educational grade level spectrum.

WIDE DISSEMINATION NECESSARY

At the end of the school year 1966-1967, when the smoke of educational innovation settles momentarily, we will discover that a few of the multitude of innovative projects will have proven to be very successful. At this point we must decide what to do with these projects. My suggestion would be to institute a program of massive dissemination of the proven projects. If the federal and state governments do not find a better method of disseminating their successful projects than those presently used, we will waste hundreds of millions of dollars in duplication of effort by thousands of individual school districts. One of the grave mistakes we make in social planning in this country is to assume that the problems of a specific area are so unique that each individual area must work out its own solutions. I believe that if someone devises an educational project that succeeds with the Negro urban slum-dweller of Detroit, there is an excellent chance that the same project, with perhaps slight modification, would work in Chicago, New York, or Los Angeles.

Of course, much of this talk about each district working out its own solutions is simply the thinly disguised local-state-federal power struggle. State departments of education should not be allowed to dictate local policy, but I do think they should be much more active than they have been in the past in making exemplary projects and experiments available to local districts.

CONSTRUCTIVE VALUES POSSIBLE

For example, the dissemination of successful ESEA projects at both the state and federal levels is done primarily by a written description. The written report or descriptive brochure is notoriously ineffective in instigating educational change. What is needed is a live demonstration of the successful projects. There should be teams of persons operating out of state offices who go to particular districts to consult and demonstrate what the new effective projects can accomplish. If the local district liked what it saw, the state could even help in setting up the project. Nothing impresses a local district so much as seeing an educational project or method actually succeed *in its own classrooms*. Well done films would also be far more effective than the written brochure.

Another virtue of a more vigorous dissemination program would be to encourage those districts that are lukewarm about compensatory education to take a more active interest in their disadvantaged students.

The new concern for the disadvantaged in our schools is going to result in more significant educational research and innovation during the next five years than has occurred during the preceding 65. It would be a terrible mistake to assume that the fruits of all of this activity have relevance only for those who work with the disadvantaged. These results have relevance for all students from the most affluent suburbs to our poorest central city slums.

What we learn from working with children in Project Head Start may have implications for post graduate university students. (I personally know of university-level mathematics instruction that has already been affected by the Berkeley project of teaching abstract, conceptually orientated mathematics to disadvantaged elementary school children.)

There has never been a more exciting time to be involved in education. It is just possible that the new concern for the disadvantaged may be the genesis of a new concern for education in general. ///